

**Appln No. 09/582,175**

**Amdt date August 13, 2003**

**Reply to Office action of June 4, 2003**

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Amend claims 9, 10 and 15 as follows:

6. (Previously Amended) An apparatus for conducting liquid separation utilizing an ion exchange process, the apparatus comprising:

    a liquid separation column, the column comprising a partition within the column dividing the column, into first and second vertical compartments, the vertical compartments being joined at their lower ends to form a U-tube portion between the compartments, wherein the first and second compartments are in fluid communication;

    each vertical compartment including an upper fluid inlet port located in the top of the compartment, the inlet ports being in fluid communication with the interior of the compartments and an external fluid source;

    each vertical compartment being equipped with an upper bed disposed inside each compartment, the beds being proximate to the upper end of the compartments and below the inlet ports;

    the upper beds having fluid distribution nozzles, wherein fluid received from the inlet ports is directed into the compartments at a controlled flow rate;

    each compartment further including an outlet port for backwashing, each outlet port being disposed adjacent to and

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below each upper bed, wherein the outlet ports remove particulate matter larger than the upper bed nozzle openings; and

an ion exchange resin layer disposed within each vertical compartment, wherein a free board is defined between a top level of the ion exchange resin layer and the upper bed in each compartment, whereby the free board allows the resin layer to expand and contract during the liquid separation process.

7. (Previously Presented) The liquid separation apparatus of claim 6, wherein the vertical compartments further include a sight glass for monitoring the level of the resin layer.

8. (Previously Presented) A liquid separation process performed by the apparatus of claim 6, wherein the inlet and outlet ports are in fluid communication with a service fluid supply, a regenerant fluid supply, a backwash fluid supply, and a pump for pumping the service fluid, regenerant fluid, and backwash fluid through the apparatus; the process comprising the steps of:

pumping service fluid through the inlet port of the first compartment down through the ion exchange resin layer of the first compartment and up through the ion exchange layer of the second compartment, the filtered fluid exiting the apparatus through the inlet port of the second compartment;

regenerating the ion exchange resin layers by pumping regenerating fluid though the inlet port of the second

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compartment down through the ion exchange resin layer of the second compartment and up through the ion exchange layer of the first compartment, wherein the regenerant fluid exits the apparatus through the inlet port of the first compartment; and

backwashing the apparatus when the pressure drop of the service fluid increases to a predetermined level.

9. (Currently Amended) The liquid separation process of claim 8, wherein the step of backwashing when the pressure drop of the service fluid reaches a predetermined level, comprises:

backwashing the resin in the first compartment by pumping the backwash fluid at a controlled flowrate through the inlet port of the second compartment and outflowing the fluid through the outlet port of the first compartment; and

backwashing the resin [at] in the second compartment by pumping the backwash fluid at a controlled flowrate through the inlet port [at] of the first compartment and outflowing the fluid through the outlet port of the second compartment.

10. (Currently Amended) The liquid separation process of claim 8, wherein the step of backwashing when the pressure drop of the service fluid reaches a predetermined level, comprises:

backwashing the resin in the first compartment by pumping the backwash fluid at a controlled flowrate through the [U-tube] inlet port of the second compartment and outflowing the fluid through the outlet port of the first compartment; and

backwashing the resin at the second compartment by pumping the backwash fluid at a controlled flowrate through the

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[U-tube] inlet port of the first compartment and outflowing the fluid through the outlet port of the second compartment.

11. (Previously Presented) The liquid separation process of claim 8, wherein the step of backwashing when the pressure drop of the service fluid reaches a predetermined level, comprises:

opening simultaneously the outlet ports in both the first and second compartments; and

pumping the backwash fluid through the [U-tube] inlet port and outflowing the backwash fluid through the outlet [ports] port of each compartment.

15. (Currently Amended) The liquid separation apparatus of claim 6 wherein the partition does not extend to a lower end of the column for defining the U-tube portion between the compartments and allowing for the fluid communication between the compartments.